

# The Price of Ethical Coherence in Charitable Giving

**Roman Antoschin**

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

**Christian Schlereth**

WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

**Christine Eckert**

Technical University of Munich (TUM)

Cite as:

Antoschin Roman, Schlereth Christian, Eckert Christine (2025), The Price of Ethical Coherence in Charitable Giving. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (125618)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



# The Price of Ethical Coherence in Charitable Giving

## Abstract

Charities face the challenge of designing fundraising communication elements—such as images and texts—that are economically successful in drawing donations and maintaining ethical coherence, meaning they are seen as legally and morally acceptable. Previous research suggests that ethical coherence and economic success in fundraising can conflict. While economic success is immediately measurable, ethical coherence is subtle and long-term, making it difficult to quantify. This research (1) proposes how to measure the price of ethical coherence through a field experiment and survey, (2) applies this concept to compare solution- and problem-oriented communication, and (3) examines donor reactions by proximity to the charity. Findings reveal price variation, suggesting ethical coherence and economic success depend on communication elements and donor proximity. Thus, charities must strategically decide which elements to prioritize for ethical coherence, balancing it against economic success.

**Keywords:** *fundraising communication, ethical coherence, donor behavior*

**Track:** *Social Responsibility & Ethics*